

Barbeque Man Unleashed: The Greatest Professional Wrestling Work Of All Time

by

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy in the Department of
Music in the Graduate School
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2013

ABSTRACT

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Abstract

Barbeque Man Unleashed consists of two chapters. Chapter 1 is an original score, *Barbeque Man Unleashed: The Greatest Professional Wrestling Work Of All Time*. Chapter 2 is an article entitled "*Prelude To a Fist*" concerning the subject of musical depictions of morality in the practice of professional wrestling entrance themes.

Barbeque Man Unleashed is a symphonic ballet scored for piano and virtual orchestra. It depicts the fictitious rivalry between North Carolinian professional wrestlers Barbeque Man, Jr. and Baron Banks Gentry. Divided into two parts, or two wrestling matches, the contrasting entrance themes for the two wrestlers clash to result in overlapping key centers, rhythms, and tempos. The music was written as a through-composed score to be shown with a video, "*Barbeque Man Unleashed: Symphonic Ballet With Action Figures*." *Barbeque Man Unleashed* fuses together various musical styles, drawing on currents drawn from high modernism (such as serialization of pitch and rhythm and collage); cartoon music (such as the highly ironic scores of Carl Stallings), Hollywood blockbusters, and Southern popular music (including several styles of country music and gospel). Though none of the borrowed tropes in this piece are immune from parody, they are all valued equally in terms of their emotional weight in telling the story.

Chapter 2 introduces a study on musical depictions of morality in entrance music in World Wrestling Federation (WWF) professional wrestling from 1985-1997. Designed to elicit an immediate response from the audience, entrance music acts as the first

component in revealing the wrestler's role, traditionally hero or villain, *babyface* or *heel*. While the intention of music in 'real sports' is to excite the crowd and perhaps mentally encourage the athlete for competition (*e.g.*, a baseball player walks to home plate; during basketball time-outs), music in the WWF is produced to intentionally connect musical styles and materials to specific morality in wrestlers' characters and identities. In some cases, wrestlers reversed roles in the scripted storylines and their original music was altered through re-orchestration, re-harmonization, and the recycling of previously used themes. Focusing on how WWF composers presented musical genres, instruments, and even melodic and harmonic figures, this chapter emphasizes how entrance music heightens in-ring drama and how it developed to blur musical right from wrong in the culture of its fans.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Kenneth and Peggy.

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Barbeque Man Unleashed:
The Greatest Professional Wrestling Work Of All Time
A Symphonic Ballet

Paul Swartzel

Preface

Barbeque Man Unleashed: The Greatest Professional Wrestling Work of All Time

Work- (1) Fake. (2) Pretend to make something look real. (3) Wrestle.

-John Abercrombie's *Guide to Wrestling Terminology* ¹

Work (verb)- To deceive or manipulate an audience.

- Wikipedia, "Glossary of Professional Wrestling Terms" ²

Introduction

My first appreciation for classical music as a child was through professional wrestling. Seeing my favorite wrestlers make grand entrances accompanied to the sounds of an orchestra, I was convinced they composed the music. I began to take my dad's camcorder and record myself playing piano pieces. My performances could not begin until I gave an interview to the camera, mimicking the diction wrestlers gave in theirs. The piece was my opponent, the piano my wrestling ring. "Ya know something, Mean Gene, for too long *Minuet in G* has stood in the way of what's right, and it's time for some payback!" Music, for me, was a wild, exaggerated home for escapism, ultimately leading to the reinstitution of justice until my teacher assigned a new piece. I wrote *Barbeque Man Unleashed: The Greatest Professional Wrestling Work of All Time* in attempt to reconnect with that home.

My dissertation research centers on entrance music in professional wrestling. Designed to elicit an immediate response from the audience, entrance music acts as the first component in revealing the wrestler's role, traditionally hero or villain, *babyface* or

¹ Kluck, Ted. *Headlocks and Dropkicks*. Denver: Praeger, 2009.

² "Glossary of Professional Wrestling Terms." *Wikipedia*. Web. Accessed 22, February 2013.

heel. Barbeque Man Unleashed depicts the fictitious rivalry between North Carolinian professional wrestlers Barbeque Man, Jr. (babyface) and Baron Banks Gentry (heel). Their contrasting entrance themes form the basis of the musical development in the piece. The score is divided into two sections, or wrestling matches, and reflects changes in wrestling storylines I witnessed growing up, progressing from family-friendly morality plays as a child to more adult oriented and racy content during the so-called WWF 'Attitude Era' of my teenage years (1988-1999).

The score for *Barbeque Man Unleashed* is not for live performance but rather a representation of a digital composition. It was originally intended that a piano soloist could perform the piece live with electronics, cabaret style. This score attempts to preserve some version of the envisioned live performance I had in mind and which I hope to complete at a later date. In particular, the following sections lend themselves immediately to performance by a piano soloist:

Part 1: mm. 84-109

Part 2: mm. 13-64, 118-207, 226-306.

The music was written as a through-composed score to be shown with a video, "*Barbeque Man Unleashed: Symphonic Ballet With Action Figures*," created by Gray Swartzel, Samir Arora, and me. Both were presented in Scheaffer Theater, Duke University, on March 3, 2013. The present score does not include all of the music used in the video, but is rather something like a suite. The time line refers to the location in the video. The video with my music may be found at the following URL:

<https://vimeo.com/60915697>

Synopsis of the Action

Part One.

It is a dark time for the International Wrestling Federation (IWF), as the villainous Baron Banks Gentry has defeated longtime fan favorite 'Barbeque Man' Ervie Moontower with a devastating move known as The Foreclosure. 'Barbeque Man' dies from his injuries, while his wife, Barbeque Ma'am, dies from shock. Their only child, Montezuma, witnesses the horror from the crowd. With no prior wrestling experience and armed with only his late father's entrance music, Montezuma challenges Gentry to a match for the following night at Monday Night Ruckus.

They make their entrances. After a tense faceoff, Gentry produces an inheritance notification and slaps Montezuma. They enter a slapping frenzy, and eventually Montezuma slams Gentry's head ten times into the turnbuckle. Dazed and seeing birds, Gentry pretends to beg forgiveness. Out of nowhere, Gentry's personal financial consultant, Vanderbilt Jenkins, flies into the ring and slaps Montezuma. With the referee distracted with Jenkins, Gentry hits Montezuma in the head with a steel chair. Montezuma collapses, and Gentry pins him to the referees' count of three. The audience is stunned as a victorious Gentry walks out with Jenkins, the championship belt draped over his shoulder. Montezuma is seriously injured and placed on a stretcher. The scene fades to black.

Montezuma has some tough years after the deaths of his parents and subsequent loss to Baron Banks Gentry. Suffering from mental illness and substance abuse, he visits

his parents' graves every night of Wrestlefest, begging forgiveness, looking for a sign. One night, a voice calls out: it's The Legend. The Legend offers to train him as a wrestler if he promises to get clean. Agreeing, they travel to the world's toughest wrestling locations. Soon entering the ring again, Montezuma becomes known as Barbeque Man, Jr., winning the adoration of wrestling fans all over the world, despite a losing record. One winter, BBQ Man, Jr. unexpectedly wins a 30-man Battle Royale and is given the opportunity to challenge Gentry for the IWF Heavyweight Championship at Wrestlefest 30.

Part Two

At Wrestlefest 30, after making their respective entrances, BBQ Man, Jr. and Gentry have a tense faceoff. They battle over a series of wrestling holds until Gentry slams Jr. to the mat and then out of the ring. Gentry reveals a toilet from underneath the ring and sticks Jr.'s head in it repeatedly. Baron Banks slaps him several times and puts him in The Foreclosure, the dreaded modified sleeper hold.

While in The Foreclosure, Jr. dreams of a forest. He hears voices and sees an old musical birdhouse, his blanket from childhood, and a teddy bear. Regaining his strength, Jr.'s arm rises as he breaks out of The Foreclosure. He hulks up and becomes impervious to pain, dishing punishment to Gentry with a series of kicks, elbows, and leg drops. Climbing the top rope to deliver his father's patented Barbeque Man Elbow, Vanderbilt Jenkins jumps in to smash a steel chair into Jr.'s face. With Jr. dazed, Jenkins charges. Jr. ducks at the last minute, and Jenkins flies out of the ring and crashes into the Spanish broadcasting table.

Gentry snaps his fingers and a collection of evil henchmen enter the arena and circle the ring. Gentry and Jr. have a sword fight, with Jr. slicing off Gentry's tie. Two archers shoot arrows at Jr., followed by an evil Transformer with laser explosives. They miss. Mozart and Beethoven jump into the ring to attack Jr. and are quickly dismissed. Gentry and a chainsaw-wielding Richard Wagner corner Jr. Just when it seems Jr. has met his end, a Tyrannosaurus Rex ridden by Farooq, the great protector, eats Wagner. Jr. drops the distracted Gentry with a 'Barbeque Man Stunner.' Jr. climbs the top turnbuckle and successfully delivers the 'Barbeque Man Elbow,' pinning Gentry to the referee's count of three. We have a new champion.

Brief Example of Musical Development

Ever since seeing Grandmaster Flash give a musical demonstration of hip-hop record spinning in 2004, I have been fascinated by the idea of taking two distinct musical materials and overlapping and crosscutting them to create something new. My first attempt at this was a piece for two pianos, *Combine Records* (2005), in which I wrote two separate piano pieces and, using effects pedals, treated them as if operated by an imaginary turntable performer. In *Barbeque Man Unleashed*, contrasting entrance themes for the two wrestlers clash to result in overlapping key centers, rhythms, and tempos. Barbeque Man, Jr. (Montezuma Moontower) first enters to his late father's entrance music, a fast tempo 4/4 country rock theme in F.



Baron Banks Gentry's Theme is a 3/4 waltz in A.



Colliding in the ring in Part One, the prevailing tonality is associated with the wrestler in control of the match at any given time. If there is no clear wrestler in control, their themes overlap in jagged clashes. This can be seen most clearly in Part One beginning at measure 86, where Gentry's theme—roughly related to A major—is heard in the right hand, and in the left hand Barbeque Man's Father's theme is heard in fragments related to F, Eb and Ab. In m. 87, the hands flip and the RH plays the Barbeque Man (F-Eb-Ab music) and the LH descends using notes from Gentry's A major.



I establish the two themes of the two principals in Part One and for the most part the music mimics the action on the screen. At the end of Part One, Barbeque Man, Jr. enters to his own entrance music, a more angular B flat minor theme in 13/16 (Part One, mm 196).

Part Two is characterized by a more free-flowing, continuous musical form with greater independence from the choreographic action. Its musical figures derive from a combination of the entrance themes, but as seen through the prism of Arnold Schoenberg's *Klavierstück* Op. 19, No. 6. A few examples suffice to trace the connection (not so much in the order of appearance, but to outline the point).

The 3-note chords beginning Part Two (in the top two staves) correspond to the static chords opening Schoenberg's piece.

Similarly, the repeated opening piano figure beginning in m. 209 outlines a wedge shape derived from the pitches found in measure 8 of the Schoenberg.

The image displays a musical score comparison between Arnold Schoenberg's Op. 19, No. 6 and a piece by Swartzel titled 'Barbeque Man Unleashed'. The score is presented in two systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs).

- Top System:**
 - Schoenberg- op. 19, no. 6:** Shows a piano figure with a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a triplet of eighth notes in the left hand.
 - Swartzel- Barbeque Man Unleashed:** Shows a piano figure with a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a triplet of eighth notes in the left hand.
- Bottom System:**
 - Schoenberg in m. 8:** Shows a piano figure with a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a triplet of eighth notes in the left hand.
 - Swartzel in m. 209-210:** Shows a piano figure with a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a triplet of eighth notes in the left hand.

Below the bottom system, there are two labels: "Wedge shape derived from m. 8" and "Eight note theme derived from wedge shape". The "Eight note theme" is shown as a sequence of notes, and its "Inversion" is shown as a sequence of notes below it.

I imagined Schoenberg's opus having a stranglehold on the first five minutes of the rematch, not so much to achieve postmodern irony, but because I liked the sound of Schoenberg's bells suspended into a kind of eternity.

I've always found wrestling matches to be inherently musical, specifically anticipating the referee's count to three. In many matches, the hero will slam the villain's head into the turnbuckle exactly ten times as the crowd counts along, slowing as the hits approach ten; this action is depicted in Part One, mm. 107-109. Many other wrestling rituals are depicted, including the faceoff, the villain breaking the rules and getting away with it, a wrestler crashing down upon the Spanish broadcasting table, the hero 'hulking up' after it seems all hope is lost, climbing the top turnbuckle, and third party wrestlers interrupting the action.

One musical idea explored in the piece is what I call a *metrical kaleidoscope*, in which musical materials in various time signatures are stacked on top of one another in

succession. Instead of rhythmic cacophony, the figures are designed so listeners can hear numerous interlocking time signatures, all of which depend on their focus. Listeners can hypothetically hear several time signatures morph at any given moment; repeated audition leads the listener to feel a different rhythmic focus each time. I hope to have achieved a feeling whereby the music is felt as rhythmic in the absence of regular pulse; if one were dancing to the music, no choreography would ever feel wrong. This practice is utilized in the ‘Hulking up’ scene, in which Barbeque Man, Jr. breaks out of a submission move, fighting back against Gentry (p. 59, mm. 359 through mm. 391). The following metrical kaleidoscope reiterates Barbeque Man Jr’s second entrance music, now more fully realized and in stacked time signatures of 13/16, 4/4, and 3/4. The bass ostinato is in 13/16, the choir and tambourines are in 4/4, and the bongos and bass drums slams are in 3/4 (not notated).³

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system, labeled 'Orch 1/ Piano', shows a piano part with a bass line and a melodic line. A 'BB' (Basso Continuo) part is indicated above the piano part. The second system, labeled 'Orch.', shows a piano part with a bass line and a melodic line. A 'Gospel Choir' part is indicated above the piano part. The third system, labeled 'Perc/FX', shows a piano part with a bass line and a melodic line. A tempo marking of 16'50" is indicated below the piano part. The score is written in 4/4 time, with a tempo marking of 16'50" below the piano part.

³ The piano plays mostly in 13/16 but occasionally jumps through each of the other time signatures to further obscure a uniform beat.

Musical Reasons for Creating the Piece

I saw the idea of scoring a professional wrestling match as an incredible challenge. The slow pacing of a match often surprises first time viewers, as wrestling fans would feel cheated to see a main event match end in a few minutes. They want dramatic action over an extended period with many unexpected turns. When I first started writing this piece, I thought it would be interesting to create a slow, atmospheric piece with periodic loud hits to emulate the slams, something slightly similar in sound to Andriessen's *De Tijd*. However, after writing about five minutes of this initial music, I realized I was being artistically dishonest. I didn't want to create a meditation on wrestling but a spectacle, as a wrestling match is meant to be. Like much of the music I love, wrestling relies heavily on timing, but it's also not monochromatic. Wrestling matches can go from serious to comedic in an instant, playing with the emotions and failing if allowing the viewer to get too familiar and comfortable. Viewers are supposed to feel angry, surprised, sad, happy, disappointed, scared, and amused, and sometimes in no particular order. You can't categorize great wrestling matches by a singular sentiment. *Barbeque Man Unleashed* fuses together various musical styles, drawing on currents from high modernism (such as serialization of pitch and rhythm and collage); cartoon music (such as the highly ironic scores of Carl Stallings), Hollywood blockbusters, and Southern popular music (including several styles of country music and gospel). Though none of the borrowed tropes in this piece are immune from parody, they are all valued equally in terms of their emotional weight in telling the story.

In addition to musical reasons, I was also fascinated by what Henry Jenkins III has called “*a form of masculine melodrama which, like its nineteenth century precedents, lends its voice to the voiceless and champions the powerless*” (64).⁴ Ultimately, the joy of professional wrestling is based on watching highly skilled performers create unforgettable stories through semi-predetermined choreography. The same can be said for listening to music. Jenkins concludes:

[Wrestling] celebrates and encourages working-class resistance to economic injustice and political abuse. It recognizes and values the diversity of American society...In short, wrestling embodies the fundamental contradictions of the American populist tradition. The politics of WWF wrestling is punch-drunk and rambunctious, yet it builds upon authentic anger and frustrations we cannot ignore if we want to understand the state of contemporary American culture. Wrestling makes you want to shout, and perhaps we have had too much silence.”

Through the creation of a new match, *Barbeque Man Unleashed* is an attempt to form a soundtrack for the entire spectacle that made me love music in the first place.

Table I: List of the Virtual Instrument Libraries⁵

Symphobia 1 and 2	Pianoteq 4
True Strike Percussion 1	Superior Drummer 2.0
Omnisphere	Trilian
Stylus RMX	Apple Logic Loops
Prime Loops’ Dirty South Vocal Samples	Blastwave FX

⁴ Jenkins III, Henry. “Never Trust a Snake.” *Steel Chair to the Head*. Ed. Nicholas Sammond. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005. This comment follows Jenkins’ exploration of the misogyny and racist elements presented in some of the storylines from the early 90s (pp. 52-64), comments with which I agree. I was aware in creating this score and study that there was a danger that I might serve as a vehicle to perpetuate these stereotypes. At the same time, the popularity of the WWF and its use of music in particular suggested a need for scholarly and artistic inquiry, which can be done without endorsing undesirable stereotypes.

⁵ Purchased by the author with full creative license (2012).

Barbeque Man Unleashed: Part One

(Subtitles): "At Wrestlefest 24, Baron Banks Gentry became the new IWF Heavyweight Champion when he defeated longtime fan favorite 'Barbeque Man' Ervie Moontower with a devastating move known as The Foreclosure."

30" ♩ = 68 highest note possible

Orchestra 1/
Piano Solo

Women's Chorus

Low Brass and Piano

Orchestra 2

Muted Strings

Percussion/FX

Wind noise

Bass Drum w/Reverb

Time in Video [0'00"] [0'31"]

"Barbeque Man died from his injuries that evening.
His wife, Barbeque Ma'am, died from shock."

"Their only child, Montezuma,
witnessed the horror from the crowd."

Orch. 1/
Piano

Steel Guitar and Flute

Orch. 2

Ord. Bass

Tam tam

Perc/FX

"Without any previous wrestling experience and armed with only his late father's entrance music, Montezuma challenged Gentry to a match for the following night at Monday Night Ruckus...."

15 Soprano Voice A

Orch. 1/
Piano *p* ee uu oo ee ah *f*

Orch. 2 Elec. guitar over drive *f*

(8th) -----

Perc/FX 15

Montezuma (Barbeque Man, Jr.) makes his entrance...

20

Orch. 1/
Piano

Orch. 2 Elec. bass *f*

Perc/FX Drumset *f*

23

Orch. 1/
Piano

Orch. 2

Perc/FX

[1'26'']

26

Orch. 1/
Piano

Orch. 2

Perc/FX

Baron Banks Gentry makes his entrance...

Orch. 1/
Piano

29 **B** = 88 **Harpischord**

Orch. 2

29 **Full Orch. and Chorus** *pp* *f*

Perc/FX

29 **Tenor** **Cash Register FX**

f Ah! cha - ching! [1'52"]

Orch. 1/
Piano

33

Orch. 2

33 **Flutes and Clarinets** **Trumpet**

Perc/FX

33

cha - ching!

40

Orch. 1/
Piano

Orch. 2

Perc/FX

cha - ching!

The two wrestlers have a tense faceoff...

$\text{♩} = 60$

C

Orch. 1/
Piano

mp

Strings and Harpsichord

Orch. 2

46

Brass repeated notes as fast as possible (ad lib)

mf

String Gliss.

p

Cheering, chanting audience

2'22"

[Inaudible Names of Wrestlers]

ff

BBG produces an inheritance notification...

D ♩ = 88

Orch. 1/
Piano

p

Orch. 2

f *p* Flute Classical Guitar

p dolce rubato

Perc/FX

[2'42"]

Jr. slaps Gentry multiple times...

58

Orch. 1/
Piano

Brass *f*

58

Orch. 2

strings *ff* 8va

58

Perc/FX

Orch. 1/
Piano

Orch. 2

Perc/FX

Harpichord
and Flute

Sopranos

Brass

63

8^{va}

f

p

4/4

7/16

4/4

4/4

4/4

Orch. 1/
Piano

Orch. 2

Perc/FX

Montezuma is dazed...

Punch Drunk Piano

Elec. Gtr. feedback

Bowed Piano

Wind hiss

67

8^{va}

rit

p

4/4

3/4

4/4

3/4

4/4

4/4

[3'12"]

Montezuma blocks Gentry's next slap...
Allegro drammatico
 ♩ = 112

Orch. 1/
Piano

Orch. 2
Full Orchestra

Perc/FX

Rooster sound

This musical score segment, marked 'Allegro drammatico' with a tempo of 112, depicts a dramatic moment. It features three staves: 'Orch. 1/ Piano', 'Orch. 2' (labeled 'Full Orchestra'), and 'Perc/FX'. The 'Orch. 1/ Piano' staff begins at measure 72 with a rapid, ascending sixteenth-note scale. The 'Orch. 2' staff also starts at measure 72 with a similar rhythmic pattern, which then transitions into a more complex, chromatic passage. A 'Rooster sound' effect is indicated by a series of 'x' marks on the 'Perc/FX' staff, corresponding to a specific rhythmic pattern in the orchestra. The score is written in 3/4 time and includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

E *Montezuma pushes Gentry...*
Poco pesante
(a little heavier)
 ♩ = 116

Orch. 1/
Piano

Orch. 2
Brass

Perc/FX

Gentry pushes back...

[3'42"]

This musical score segment, marked 'Poco pesante' with a tempo of 116, shows a shift in the musical mood. It consists of three staves: 'Orch. 1/ Piano', 'Orch. 2' (labeled 'Brass'), and 'Perc/FX'. The 'Orch. 1/ Piano' staff is mostly silent, with a few notes appearing later. The 'Orch. 2' staff begins at measure 76 with a powerful, sustained chord, followed by a series of rhythmic patterns. The 'Perc/FX' staff is also mostly silent, with a few notes appearing later. The score is written in 3/4 time and includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings. A time signature change to 3/4 is indicated at the bottom of the 'Perc/FX' staff.

They push each other back and forth...

81

Orch. 1/
Piano

Orch. 2

Perc/FX

This musical system covers measures 81 to 83. The first staff, labeled 'Orch. 1/ Piano', is entirely silent, indicated by a whole rest. The second staff, 'Orch. 2', contains a complex rhythmic pattern. It begins with a triplet of eighth notes, followed by a series of sixteenth notes and eighth notes, with various accidentals (sharps, flats, naturals) and dynamic markings like accents and slurs. The third staff, 'Perc/FX', is also silent, indicated by a whole rest.

84

Under tempo *accel.*

Orch. 1/
Piano

Orch. 2

Perc/FX

This musical system covers measures 84 and 85. The first staff, 'Orch. 1/ Piano', shows a melodic line starting at measure 84, with a tempo change from 'Under tempo' to 'accel.' indicated by a dashed line. The second staff, 'Orch. 2', features a dense, fast-moving texture with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, starting with a 'mf' (mezzo-forte) dynamic. The third staff, 'Perc/FX', has a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.

They enter a slapping frenzy...

Piu mosso

$\text{♩} = 148$

Solo Piano

Orch. 1/
Piano

F

mf

Pizz strings

Orch. 2

f

mf

Perc/FX

Orch. 1/
Piano

88

Orch. 2

88

Perc/FX

88

90

Orch. 1/
Piano

Orch. 2

arco str. and xyla

Perc/FX

93

Orch. 1/
Piano

Orch. 2

marimbas

Bongos

Perc/FX

mf

97

Orch. 1/
Piano

Orch. 2

Perc/FX

100

Orch. 1/
Piano

Orch. 2

Perc/FX

Drum Set with double bass pedal

G *Jr. pushes Gentry into the turnbuckle...*

Orch. 1/
Piano *f*

Orch. 2 *strings* *mf*

Perc/FX *[4'27"]*

...and slams Gentry's head ten times

8va *Pesante*

Orch. 1/
Piano *ff*

Orch. 2 *Brass* *ff*

Perc/FX

Gentry falls to the ground dazed...

Orch. 1/
Piano

Orch. 2

Perc/FX

Gentry seems to beg forgiveness...
Meno mosso

$\text{♩} = 88$

H Cuckoo Flute

Orch. 1/
Piano

mp Solo Cello

mp

Orch. 2

mp Str. col legno and Ww.

Perc/FX

[4'41"]

*Vanderbilt Jenkins, Gentry's financial consultant,
flies in the ring and attacks Jr.*

♩ = 112
Allegro drammatico

Orch. 1/
Piano

Orch. 2

Perc/FX

Violins

Full Orchestra

Overblown flute

8va

*While the ref is distracted,
Gentry hits Jr. with a steel chair...*

Gentry pins Montezuma and wins...

I

Orch. 1/
Piano

Orch. 2

Perc/FX

Temple blocks

Duduk

Noise with barely audible pitch

Bass Drum w/Reverb

mp

5'01"

Piano, distant w. reverb.

freely

p

129

Orch. 1/
Piano

Orch. 2

Perc/FX

Jr. is placed on a stretcher and wheeled out of the arena...

Adagio
♩ = 52

rit.

Steel Guitar and Muted Strings

p

135

Orch. 1/
Piano

Orch. 2

Perc/FX

(Subtitles): "Montezuma had some tough times after the deaths of his parents and subsequent loss to Baron Banks Gentry..." "Alone in the world while battling mental illness and substance abuse, it seemed as if he'd never survive..." "And every night of Wrestlefest, he'd visit his parents' graves, begging forgiveness, maybe looking for a sign..."

J

Orch. 1/
Piano

Orch. 2

Perc/FX

141

Bass drum

Chorus

6'31"

p

"The Legend made him an offer: Get clean and he would train him. He agreed, and they traveled to the world's toughest wrestling locations. It wasn't easy, but Montezuma persevered."

"..And then one day,
a voice called out..."

"It was... The Legend."

poco a poco piu mosso

148

Orch. 1/
Piano

Orch. 2

Perc/FX

148

Brass

mp

mp

"One day, he showed up for training only to find a note..."

"You're gonna need some entrance music. Good Luck."

155

Orch. 1/
Piano

Orch. 2

Perc/FX

Full Orchestra

mf

"He soon gained the respect and adoration of
wrestling fans worldwide, despite a losing record..."

"The following winter, he entered a 30-man Battle Royale
with an opportunity to face Baron Banks Gentry at Wrestlefest..."

K

Grandioso

Orch. 1/
Piano

Orch. 2

Perc/FX

161

f

8va - - - -

8va - - -

[7'51"]

167 "And he won." "Ladies and Gentlemen..." "It's time for the rematch." [L] Barbeque Man Jr. (Montezuma) makes his entrance...

Orch. 1/
Piano

Orch. 2

Perc/FX

Rubber Band Bass

Rooster sound

[8'30"]

173

Orch. 1/
Piano

Orch. 2

Perc/FX

Slide Guitar

Elec. Bass

179

Orch. 1/
Piano

Rooster sound

Stomps and claps

f

179

Orch. 2

179

Perc/FX

183

Orch. 1/
Piano

Elec. Guitar

f

183

Orch. 2

183

Perc/FX

187

Orch. 1/
Piano

Orch. 2

Perc/FX

192

Orch. 1/
Piano

Orch. 2

Perc/FX

Abrupt cut-off

Part Two: Rematch

No Disqualification Match for the IWF Heavyweight Championship

$\text{♩} = 132$

M 197 **Carillon**

Orch 1/
Piano *f*

197 **Strings**

Orch. *fz p*

Non vibrato *mp*

Ad lib upward pizz

197 **Bass Drum and Gong with Reverb**

Perc/FX *f*

Time in Video **[10'25"]**

Gentry shows off his championship belt... *Jr. and Gentry have a tense faceoff...*

Tempo
Allegro Agitato

205 **Piano** **N** $\text{♩} = 134$ **Quasi-Staccato, Agitated**

Orch 1/
Piano *mf*

205 **Boy Choir**

Horns *f*

Ag - nus Dei

205 *f*

Perc/FX

[10'59"]

211

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

They lock up...

214

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

Pizz. Strings

Xylophone

[11'07"]

mf

217

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

219

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

w/ Trumpet

Jr. puts Gentry in a full nelson...

221

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Woodwinds

Perc/FX

223

Orch 1/
Piano

mf

Orch.

Brass

Temple Blocks

Perc/FX

[11'21"]

225

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

Footstomps and Claps

f

227

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

Roto Toms

ff

8va

Jr. puts Gentry in a headlock...

P w/ pizz strings

Orch 1/
Piano

mf

Orch.

Electric Bass

mf

Perc/FX

[11'33"]

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Marimba

Violins

Perc/FX

mf

234

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

[11'40"]

236

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

Gentry breaks out of the hold...

238

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

80s Synth

Perc/FX

240

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

242

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

Tenor

Ah

Gentry bodyslams Jr.

244

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

Orchestral Cluster

Blurry Mono Synth (Sounds octave lower)

Record Scratching

Bass Drum

Feedback and wind sounds

Ah

[11'57"]

[12'00"]

p

248

Orch 1/
Piano

248

Orch.

248

Perc/FX

*Gentry parades around the ring with his arms in the air.
This pleases Vanderbilt Jenkins and his women escorts...*

251

Orch 1/
Piano

Piano out of tempo

mp

251

Orch.

251

Perc/FX

Brass

8

p

254

Orch 1/
Piano

254

Orch.

254

Perc/FX

*Gentry picks up Jr. and
throws him out of the ring...*

257

Orch 1/
Piano

Piano in tempo

257

Orch.

257

Perc/FX

[12'18"]

R 260

Orch 1/
Piano

Taped Piano Part

p

8^{va}

260

Orch.

260

Perc/FX

[12'22"]

262

Orch 1/
Piano

pp Woodwind Multiphonics

262

Orch.

262

Perc/FX

Drumset

p

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

265

(8^{va})

Gentry produces a toilet from underneath the ring...

accel.

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

268

(8^{va})

Whistling

3

3

3

[12'36"]

Orch 1/
Piano

mf

Orch.

Perc/FX

mf

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

(8^{va})

283

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

Gentry sticks Jr's head in front of the toilet...

286

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

289 *rit.* ----- **S** *a tempo*

Orch 1/
Piano

289 *ff*

Orch.

289 *ff* Metal Power Chords

Perc/FX

289 *ff* [13"10"]

Gentry sticks Jr's head in the toilet... *...brings him out of the toilet...*

292 *♩ = 210 Faster*

Orch 1/
Piano

292

Orch.

292

Perc/FX

292 Toilet submersion FX *p* *ff*

*Back in
the toilet... And out...*

♩ = 240 Faster

296

Orch 1/
Piano

296

Orch.

296

Perc/FX

(8^{va})

Toilet submersion FX

[13'18"]

299

Orch 1/
Piano

299

Orch.

299

Perc/FX

Brass

ff

Jr's head is submerged in the toilet liquid...

304

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

304

304

304

307

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

The first system of the score covers measures 307 to 309. The 'Orch 1/Piano' part consists of three staves, each with a whole rest. The 'Orch.' part features a melodic line in the right hand, starting with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a half note B4. The left hand has a complex bass line with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The 'Perc/FX' part is represented by a continuous wavy line across the three measures.

310

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

The second system of the score covers measures 310 to 312. The 'Orch 1/Piano' part consists of three staves, each with a whole rest. The 'Orch.' part features a melodic line in the right hand, starting with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a half note B4. The left hand has a complex bass line with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The 'Perc/FX' part is represented by a continuous wavy line across the three measures.

Gentry pulls Jr. out of the toilet and slaps him repeatedly

U $\text{♩} = 164$

Orch 1/
Piano

313 Piano f Pizz. Strings

Orch.

313 'Out of water' Bass and Marimba String Bass f

Perc/FX

Slap stick [13'46"]

Orch 1/
Piano

316

Orch.

316

Perc/FX

316

319

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

[13'55"]

Gentry puts Jr. in the dreaded Foreclosure

322

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

rit. ----- ♩ = 132

f

8va

Arco Strings

p

Timpani

f

[14'05"]

Jr. weakens...

328

Orch 1/
Piano

mp

Orch.

Perc/FX

This musical score segment for 'Jr. weakens...' spans measures 328 to 331. The Orch 1/Piano part features a melodic line in the right hand with a crescendo hairpin and a bass line in the left hand with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The Orch. part has a sustained chord in the right hand and rests in the left hand. The Perc/FX part is silent throughout this section.

Jr. falls unconscious...

332

Orch 1/
Piano

mp

W

$\text{♩} = 48$

Orch.

Bass pizz.

N

pp

Perc/FX

Tam tam

mp

[14'15"]

Alpenglocken
Out of tune

mp

This musical score segment for 'Jr. falls unconscious...' spans measures 332 to 335. The Orch 1/Piano part has a melodic line in the right hand with a crescendo hairpin and a bass line in the left hand with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The Orch. part has a sustained chord in the right hand with a crescendo hairpin and a bass line in the left hand with a pizzicato (*Bass pizz.*) dynamic. The Perc/FX part features a tam tam in the first measure with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic and a duration of [14'15"], followed by a bell (Alpenglocken) in the last measure with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic and a note marked 'Out of tune'.

X₈ *Jr. dreams of a musical birdhouse...*

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

[14'37"]

This musical score segment, marked with a box 'X₈', is titled 'Jr. dreams of a musical birdhouse...'. It consists of three staves. The top staff, labeled 'Orch 1/ Piano', shows a series of rests across five measures, with time signatures changing from 3/4 to 5/4 and back to 3/4. The middle staff, labeled 'Orch.', features sustained chords in the right hand and rests in the left hand, with time signatures 3/4, 5/4, and 3/4. The bottom staff, labeled 'Perc/FX', begins at measure 338 and contains a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, including triplets, with time signatures 3/4, 5/4, and 3/4. A time signature change to 3/4 occurs at the end of the segment.

and his childhood blanket...

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

whispers

Piano

pp Sa - zul - zau-ki!

pp

8va

[15'03"]

This musical score segment is titled 'and his childhood blanket...'. It consists of three staves. The top staff, labeled 'Orch 1/ Piano', starts at measure 342 with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The right hand has a 'whispers' annotation above it, and the left hand has a 'Piano' annotation above it. The middle staff, labeled 'Orch.', features sustained chords in the right hand and a melodic line in the left hand, with a 'pp' (pianissimo) dynamic marking. The bottom staff, labeled 'Perc/FX', contains a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, including triplets, with a '8va' (octave) marking above it. A time signature change from 3/4 to 4/4 occurs at measure 342. A time signature change back to 3/4 occurs at the end of the segment. A time signature change to 3/4 occurs at the end of the segment.

and a teddy bear...

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

Soprano

Eey —

Y *Jr's arm begins to rise and shake...*

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

Ah Ew Ah

[15'36"]

*Jr. breaks out of The Foreclose and
grabs Gentry by the neck*

353 Z $\text{♩} = 100$

Orch 1/
Piano *mp*

Orch. Rubber band bass *mf*

Perc/FX Rooster

6

[16'03"]

358

Orch 1/
Piano

358 Slide guitar

Orch.

358 Tambourine and woodblock (sim.)

Perc/FX

*Jr. kicks Gentry unleashes legs,
kicks, and elbows on Gentry...*

363

Orch 1/
Piano

AA

Orch.

Gospel Choir

f Whoa

Perc/FX

[16:30]

369

Orch 1/
Piano

8va

Orch.

Perc/FX

373

Orch 1/
Piano

373

Orch.

sim.

Vibraphone

Perc/FX

377

Orch 1/
Piano

377

Orch.

Gospel Choir

Perc/FX

[16'50"]

381

Orch 1/
Piano

8^{va}

Orch.

Perc/FX

Jr. climbs the top turnbuckle...

385

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

*Jenkins hits Jr.
with a chair and charges...*

CC

389

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

ffz

[17'14"]

*Jr. ducks and Jenkins flies out of the ring onto
the Spanish broadcasting table...*

392

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

p

[17'43"]

395 $\text{♩} = 132$

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

Acoustic guitar and Brass

f

[17'53"]

399

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

Trumpet

pp

pp *mp*

*Jr. turns around and Gentry snaps his fingers.
His evil henchmen walk out and encircle the ring...*

404 DD Chorus $\text{♩} = 54$

Orch 1/
Piano *p*

Orch. Brass *p*

Perc/FX Bass Drum [18'25"]

Mi - se - re - re Me - i. (sim.)

409

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch. *mp* *mf*

Perc/FX

415 *rit.* -----

Orch 1/
Piano

415 *f* Mi - se - re - re Me - i

Orch.

415 *f* *sfz p* *ff*

Perc/FX

415

Jr. and Gentry have a sword fight...

Voice: "C'mon!" EE *Agitato* ♩ = 160

421 *f*

Orch 1/
Piano

421 *f* *mp*

Orch.

421 *f* *mp*

Perc/FX

421 *Sword clash*

[19'23"]

424

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

"Oh!"

[19'33"]

427

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

"Alright!"

430

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

433

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

Nunchuk swirl

Jr. slashes off Gentry's tie. Gentry snaps his fingers again...

436

Orch 1/
Piano

mp

8va

Orch.

Woodwinds

mp

p

Perc/FX

Sword slash

Finger snap

[19'41"]

FF 440

Archers fire arrows at Jr...

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

Hi-hat with FX/ bow and arrow

p

[19'46"]

444

Orch 1/
Piano

f *p*

8^{me}

Orch.

p

Brass

Snare rim shot

Perc/FX

447

Orch 1/
Piano

f *p*

8^{me}

Orch.

mp

pizz. strings and woodwinds

Perc/FX

[19'55"]

An evil Transformer fire explosive laser cannons at Jr.

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

450

High Synth

Brass and Strings *mf*

Elec. Guitar

Canon shot

Exposion

[20'01"]

Mozart and Beethoven jump into the ring to attack Jr...

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

454

GG

$\text{♩} = 192$

mf

(Mozart Symp. 40)

mp

Violins

Canon shot

Exposion

Mozart is slapped down...

457

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

Slapstick

Beethoven is slapped down...

460

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

(Beethoven 5th symp.)

(Tristan and Isolde)

*Gentry and a chainsaw-wielding
Richard Wagner corner Jr...*

463

Orch 1/
Piano

ff

Full Orchestra

Orch.

f

Perc/FX

[20'15"]

466

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Chorus

Brass *mp*

f

Perc/FX

*Out of nowhere, a Tyrannosaurus Rex
shows up and eats Wagner...*

HH

469 $\text{♩} = 178$

f

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Full Orchestra

Perc/FX

Claps and tambourine

[20'21"]

Gentry is distracted and in disbelief...

472

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

Barbeque Man Stunner'...

The musical score is for a piece titled "Barbeque Man Stunner'...". It features four staves: "Orch 1/ Piano", "Orch.", "Orch.", and "Perc/FX". The "Orch 1/ Piano" staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The "Orch." staff has a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a key signature of one flat. The "Perc/FX" staff has a single treble clef. The score begins at measure 475. The "Orch 1/ Piano" staff contains a melodic line with various accidentals. The "Orch." staff contains a complex rhythmic pattern with many beamed notes and rests. The "Perc/FX" staff contains a simple rhythmic pattern of quarter notes. The score ends with a time signature change to 20/31.

478

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

Jr. climbs to the top of the turnbuckle...

♩ = 188

481

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

Snare Drum

[20'39"]

Jr. jumps out and successfully lands the 'Barbeque Man Elbow'

accel.

484

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

f

mf

♩ = 280

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

♩ = 188

Orch 1/
Piano

Orch.

Perc/FX

[20'46"]

We have a new champion...

♩ = 140

♩ = 140

[20'52"]

[21'08'']

The Powerbomb and the Glory...Forever.
Durham, NC. Oct. 21, 2013.

***Prelude to a Fist: Portraits of Music as Emblem of Morality in
WWF Professional Wrestling Entrance Music (1985-1997)***

A lot of people aren't interested in blurred lines between what is real and what is fake. They want the real. Wrestling fans don't care about that. They're captivated by the boundary.

– Alex Whybrow

Wrestlers remain gods because they are, for a few moments, the key which opens Nature, the pure gesture which separates Good from Evil, and unveils a form of justice which is at last intelligible.

- Roland Barthes, *On Wrestling*

Wrestling is ballet with violence. –Jesse Ventura

At WrestleMania VIII (1992), villains Papa Shango and Sid Justice attacked an overmatched Hulk Hogan. When all was seemingly lost for Hogan, electric guitar power chords blasted out of the loudspeakers in the Indianapolis Hoosier Dome. 60,000 fans instantly rose to their feet and cheered. Broadcaster Gorilla Monsoon screamed, “Wait a minute! That’s The Warrior’s music!”¹ The Ultimate Warrior, absent from wrestling seven months, emerged sprinting towards the ring to save Hogan from his attackers.

The 1980s and 90s included the first instances when fans of the World Wrestling Federation (WWF) were conditioned to identify specific entrance music with particular wrestlers. Designed to elicit an immediate response from the audience, this music acted as the first component in revealing wrestlers’ roles, traditionally hero or villain, *babyface* or *heel*. While the intention of music in ‘real sports’ is to excite the

¹ *WWF WrestleMania VIII*. Coliseum Home Video, 1992. Videocassette.

crowd and perhaps mentally encourage the athlete for competition (*e.g.*, a baseball player walks to home plate; during basketball time-outs), music in the WWF is produced to intentionally connect musical styles and materials to specific moral fabrics in wrestlers' characters and identities. In some cases, wrestlers reversed roles in the scripted storylines and their original music was altered through re-orchestration, re-harmonization, and the recycling of previously used themes. Focusing on how WWF composers presented musical genres, instruments, and even melodic and harmonic figures, this paper addresses the attempt to construct musical morality in the WWF, emphasizing how entrance music heighten in-ring drama and developed to blur musical right from wrong for its fans.

Various angles have been used to write about professional wrestling, most notably in comparisons to Greek theater (Barthes) and as a form of working class masculine melodrama (Jenkins). While entrance music is a popular topic among wrestling fans, preexisting writings on the subject have been primarily concerned with popular early 21st century bands recording entrance songs or emphasized retrospective top ten lists with no musical analysis of entrance music. Jenkins writes: "Much like nineteenth century theatrical melodrama used denotative music to define the characters' moral stances, the wrestlers' entry into the arena is preceded by theme songs which encapsulate their personalities."² In the following, I attempt for the first time to understand the composition, utilization, and evolution of entrance theme songs, these larger than life encapsulations.

² Jenkins III, Henry. "Never Trust a Snake." *Steel Chair to the Head*. Ed. Nicholas Sammond. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.

Wrestling Theme Music as Part of The WWF's Promotional Strategy, (1980-1987).

As several professional wrestling companies faced bankruptcy in the early 1980s, Vince McMahon, President of the WWF, gambled survival on reaching out to new media outlets, specifically the music industry and newly created Music Television (MTV). For this venture, commonly referred to as the 'Rock 'n' Wrestling Connection,' McMahon, through associate Lou Albano, made contacts with popular performers Cyndi Lauper and Rick Derringer, who would ultimately record songs and make music videos featuring wrestlers from the promotion. The WWF eventually included Lauper in a scripted storyline involving factions fighting over rock 'n' roll's inclusion in WWF culture. McMahon's move proved remarkably successful, as a bout featuring Lauper as wrestling manager became the highest viewed event on MTV at the time.³

The WWF released their first album in 1985 consisting of original songs and skits about wrestlers and wrestling culture. Wrestlers sang and interrupted one another to create feuds for TV broadcasts. Some tracks eventually became entrance music, though not necessarily for the specific wrestler featured on the album.⁴ The WWF was not the first wrestling promotion to create an album, but the first to make character specific entrance themes the norm for every match.⁵ The WWF released a second album, *Piledriver* (1987), focusing on less known wrestlers and personalities. At this point, entrance music was a success; one storyline from 1986-87 involved a clash between 'Mr. Wonderful' Paul Orndorff and Hulk Hogan over coveted entrance music. Due to demand,

³ Beekman, Scott. *Ringside*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006.

⁴ The most popular entrance theme of the 1980s, Hulk Hogan's *Real American*, was actually written for Big John Studd.

⁵ The first musical albums on wrestling were from England and Argentina in the 60s and 70s. WWF star Antonina Rocca released a record of Latin American Music in the 70s featuring the wrestler jumping off the top rope on its cover.

McMahon hired house composers, among them Jim Johnston and Jimmy Hart, and to date the WWF has sold millions of albums (O'Bryne 86).

How Entrance Music Functioned (1985-1997)

Perhaps a more fitting term for entrance music would be *theme*, as it also accompanies a wrestler's victory and exit from the arena. The theme for a winning babyface follows immediately after his victory, reinforcing his rightness and the reinstitution of justice in the storyline. However, sound choreographers play with audience expectations. For a winning heel, slight pauses can occur between the end of a match and playing of his theme, mirroring the reluctance of fans to accept the outcome. As described above, a match may be interrupted with theme music for a third-party wrestler involved in the storyline, though such interruptions occur more during skits or speeches rather than matches.

A losing wrestler's theme may be heard after a match to signal that the storyline has not concluded. At the 1991 Survivor Series, a four-man babyface team led by Roddy Piper lost by disqualification, resulting in music for the winning heel team led by Ric Flair (Richard Strauss's *Also Sprach Zarathustra*). Piper then attacked Flair into retreat. Fans cheered as Piper's Scottish bagpipéd theme replaced Flair's.⁶ A loser's theme is also heard if the particular character realizes his errors and switches from heel to babyface; at WrestleMania VII, heel 'Macho King' Randy Savage embraced his estranged wife, Elizabeth, who rushed to save him from attacking 'Sensational Queen' Sherri, Savage's

⁶ *WWF Survivor Series 1991*. Coliseum Home Video, 1991. Videocassette.

current companion upset over his losing a career-ending match to The Ultimate Warrior. Randy Savage instantly turned into a babyface, though he kept the same theme.⁷

The arrival of a theme can signal a supporting character's push into a more substantial role in the storylines. In 1991, a wrestler named Virgil had endured humiliation while playing a servant to the 'Million Dollar Man' Ted Dibiase. After many literal slaps to the face, Virgil finally fought back, knocking out Dibiase to the sound of a roaring audience. He appeared on the next broadcast with his own entrance music, heard for the first time.

The majority of entrance music at the first WrestleMania (1985) was pre-existing popular songs, with Phil Collins' *Easy Lover* opening the spectacle. Hulk Hogan's appearance in the film *Rocky III* led to his entering to its hit song *Eye of the Tiger*. These songs served more to excite the audience than as entrance themes, though Bruce Springsteen's then recent *Born in the USA* was used in a match pitting an American babyface against a non-American heel.⁸ The use of Springsteen and Collins' songs functioned as one-shot deals since the WWF preferred not paying royalties to recording artists.

Among house composers, original themes varied from repeated rock guitar riffs to through-composed pieces in practically any genre. Jim Johnston wrote many of the first original themes using electric guitars and synthesizers. Instrumentation often became associated with character and personality traits, playing on connotations with musical instruments and genres: a backwoods country character entered to banjo, a yuppie heel to

⁷ *WWF WrestleMania VII*. Coliseum Home Video, 1991. Videocassette.

⁸ *WWF WrestleMania*. Coliseum Home Video, 1985. Videocassette.

Kenny G-inspired soprano saxophone. The theme for evil dentist character Isaac Yankem, DDS featured a high-pitched drill on top of a barely audible classical string orchestra, as if heard in a dentist's office while having a procedure. Mankind, a mentally unstable character, entered to music resembling Barber's *Adagio*, echoing his supposedly tormented past. The man portraying Mankind, Mick Foley, occasionally wrestled as Dude Love, a free-spirit hippie complete with tie-dyed shirt and disco anthem named after his character.

Many themes began with a short sound effect or catchphrase that had first appeared during wrestler interviews or promotions. The music for heel 'Million Dollar Man' Ted Dibiase begins with smug, maniacal laughter. For Val Venis, self-professed ladies' man and pornography star, a growled, ascending saxophone glissando precedes "Hello, ladies" in imitative counterpoint [figure 1]. Sound effects from nature were used, for example, the wrestler Mantauro entered to animal noises while Skinner, the 'Alligator Man', entered to swamp sounds.

Some themes use wrestler voiceovers to quickly sum up their characters. While women sing "Money, Money, Money", Ted Dibiase speaks: "Everybody's got a price. Everybody's gonna pay, 'cause the Million Dollar Man always gets his way." Babyface-turned-heel Owen Hart once stated, "Enough is enough. It's time for a change. I tried to be a nice guy." The deranged Mankind screamed, "Why did you do this to me?" and "Just make the voices stop." Voiceovers allow for quicker recognition of character morality while the musical components have more ambiguity.

Catch phrases can also derive from audience participation. In the 90s, crowds

began to chant, “You suck!” at heel wrestler Kurt Angle. The chant grew in popularity and Angle’s theme was altered to mockingly include the lyrics, “I don’t suck!” sung with the theme’s melody. Likening his work to film scoring, Jim Johnston states that catchphrases are inserted only after completing the instrumentals and not considered when composing.⁹ However, upon further inspection, this is not always true. Rocky ‘The Rock’ Maivia’s initial theme began with the question, “Do you smell what The Rock is cooking?” As his persona as the brash ‘people’s champ’ became increasingly popular, the catchphrase was modified several times. His question intensified, and later changed to the more declarative, “If ya smell what The Rock is cookin’!” To make his entrance more dramatic, drums beats were inserted and his delivery made in tempo with the music to follow [figure 2].

The degree of thematic alteration generally depends on whether a wrestler portrays various ‘gimmick’ characters or uses his real or career name. Ric Flair always kept the same theme, and was known as Flair throughout his career despite its being a pseudonym. Always known as ‘The Rock’, Rocky Maivia’s theme alterations derive from his initial theme. Meanwhile, as the aforementioned voodoo-gimmick heel Papa Shango became Kama Mustafa, and later pimp character The Godfather, each of his themes were unrelated to the previous. Henry Jenkins III writes, “The most successful wrestlers are those who provoke immediate emotional commitments (either positive or negative) and are open to constant re-articulation, who can fit into a number of different conflicts and retain semiotic value” (Jenkins 1, 43-44). This assessment also rings true with successful lasting themes during this period, initially functioning to assist fan

⁹ Gulla, Bob. “Behind the Music.” *Guitar One*. September 2002: 94---96. Print.

investment yet flexible enough to allow for reinterpretation or alternation when the character reverses roles.

One WWF composer, Jimmy Hart, often asked wrestlers what their favorite music was and then attempted to mesh it with their character.¹⁰ In contrast, Jim Johnston stated: “A lot of times, if [a wrestler] makes a request... it’s more directed to songs that they listen to in their car or when they work out, as opposed to what the right music for their character... I look at it like I’m scoring a film for either a bad guy or a good guy. First, I look at the emotional makeup of the guy. What is the basic mood or mindset of the character?” (Gulla 96). As Johnston became the primary WWF composer, his work characterized by a greater selection of musical genres in contrast to Hart, who, given his background as a rock musician in Memphis, mostly wrote rock themes.

Tempo and the Body

Roland Barthes, in “On Wrestling”, defined the wrestler’s body as the first sign of moral code and intentions.¹¹ In relation to musical themes, the body initially functions as general indicator of tempo. Larger, lumbering wrestlers have slower tempos, while smaller and more agile wrestlers have faster tempos. Themes last until the wrestler reaches the ring, either walking or running in rhythm, so tempo plays an important role in musical styles employed. Generally, the faster the tempo, the more repetitive its musical gestures; slower tempos allow for more elaborate music. When babyface wrestlers turn heel, their new themes have slower tempos, and they adjust their entrance pacing

¹⁰ Hart, Jimmy. *The Mouth of the South: The Jimmy Hart Story*. Toronto: ECW Press, 2004.

¹¹ Barthes, Roland. “On Wrestling.” *Steel Chair to the Head*. Ed. Nicholas Sammond. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.

accordingly regardless of their body shape. Adam Bomb, a nuclear bomb themed menace in the 90s, initially walked to the ring with an ominous, pulseless theme. After turning babyface, the melody of his theme was transformed into a faster tempo heavy metal riff with electric guitar, bass, and drums. Conversely, the face painted and full leather attired tag team Demolition, popular babyfaces of the 80s, initially walked in tempo with their rock theme, with songwriter Ric Derringer singing, “*Here comes the Ax, Here comes the Smasher, The Demolition, Walking disasters.*”¹² Turning heel, they were given a pulseless, slower music similar to Adam Bomb’s initial theme. An unpopular move with fans, their new theme signaled the WWF sending them out of the promotion, perhaps easing the transition by associating their characters with less appealing music.

Theme tempo changes often signal wrestler movement through the match. Former wrestler Laurence de Garis writes that elements must be consistent: “For a wrestler to do a ‘dancer’ gimmick, it takes more than just a couple of dance moves in between spots; the dancer must move gracefully throughout.”¹³ Here, the wrestler physically adapts to his musical representation while the theme adapts to his emotional identity. When Mexican-American character Tito Santana morphed into El Matador, his movements towards his opponents, in tempo with his slower revised theme, reflecting the moves of a daring bullfighter.

In the following seven portraits, I present instances where wrestling entrance themes have been established and then altered to trace a character’s evolution in the

¹² *Demolition: Witness the Power*. Coliseum Home Video, 1989. Videocassette.

¹³ De Garis, Laurence. “The Logic of Professional Wrestling.” *Steel Chair to the Head*. Ed. Nicholas Sammond. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.

1990s. The Rockers used power chords to underline blue-collar masculinity, while Jake ‘The Snake’ Roberts’s music changes to accompany his shift from babyface to heel. From the 1990s, with the events WrestleMania VI and VIII, I relate three instances of WWF’s musical practice of tracing change and audience identification by using ethnic stereotypes, changing political events, and imitation classical music. Two concluding portraits describe the use of music in tag-team matches, such as The Darksides vs. The Royals at the 1995 Survivor Series, and the narrative changes which marked WWF’s response to competition from Ted Turner’s World Championship Wrestling in the mid to late 1990s.

(1) The Fabulous Rougeau Brothers vs. The Rockers, Wrestling Challenge (1989)

Wrestlers present themselves as composers. 80s Canadian heel tag team Fabulous Rougeau Brothers generated angry heat, or strong crowd reaction, by facetiously purporting love for their newly adopted country, The United States. Matched against The Rockers at *Wrestling Challenge*, they entered to the synth-pop *All-American Boys*. Written by their manager and WWF composer, Jimmy Hart, the song satirically claims to embody American masculinity:

“From Montreal to Memphis, Parlez-vous Français?
Tell all the girls the Rougeaus are on their way
We're called pretty boys, we're not a musclehead
We hate that long-haired look, we like the preppy look instead

We're all-American boys! (4x)

We don't like heavy metal, we don't like rock 'n' roll
All we like to listen to is Barry Manilow
On peut pas les sentir, dans le monde ils sont les pires
On aime les faire fâcher 'cause I mean we love the USA!

We're all-American boys! (4x)"¹⁴

Announced by the Wrestling Challenge broadcasters as the singers on *All-American Boys*, The Rougeaus aim to offend on several levels. "Tell all the girls" attempts to intimidate the male audience, though singing robotic, staccato sixteenth notes does not convey traditional musical masculinity [figure 3]. By claiming the easy listening singer Barry Manilow as sole musical inspiration, their villainy to WWF audiences derives from extolling rejection of rock n' roll, heavy metal, and large muscles as patriotic, All-American virtue, disrupting what Henry Jenkins III writes of as the WWF projected myth of "might makes right." (Jenkins 63) They seek to confuse American audiences by including non-translated French lyrics, purposely playing to perceived xenophobic tendencies of the working class fan base.¹⁵

The Rougeaus are not actually the singers, but their theme is written to give that impression. The instrumentals are professional, but the vocalists are deceptively amateur, blurring the authenticity of the Rougeaus as performers by alternating pitched and non-pitched vocals through the verses and seemingly laughing their way through the recording. To WWF fans, the heel theme needs to sound professional at least instrumentally for the Canadians to be taken seriously as in-ring threats.

With the Rougeaus' music cut short, The Rockers' babyface theme emerged to the roar of the crowd. Singing "We're outta control. We like to Rock n' Roll," this theme features a low fidelity distorted electric guitar riff on E, G, and A power chords [figure

¹⁴ WrestlinThemes. "Fabulous Rougeaus Theme." Online video clip. *Youtube*. 19 August, 2009. Web. June 11, 2013.

¹⁵ Translation: "You can't touch them, in the world they are the worst. We love to get them mad, cause I mean we love the USA."

4]. The Rougeaus' antithesis, the high energy and longhaired Rockers wear torn t-shirts and long tights, graciously acknowledging their adoration. Their theme is more repetitious than their opponents'; and they quickly run to the ring to stand on the turnbuckles. The Rougeaus and manager Hart respond:

Interviewer: We're down at ringside with three men obviously upset. That was [The Rocker's] song, that was them singing, and they sound pretty good.

Jimmy Hart: You gotta be crazy, you idiot! That's horrible. Who has the right and the nerve to turn off The Fabulous Rougeaus' music and put that garbage on there? These guys can't sing, they were out of key!

Jacque Rougeau: [To The Rockers] You guys think you're something else, don't you. We went to Memphis, Tennessee and recorded our own song, and what do you do? You record your own song, you copycats!¹⁶

Pitting Memphis studio-produced synth-pop vs. raw, startup garage rock n' roll, WWF morality rests on perceived masculinity and musical authenticity to blue-collar culture. However, necessity engenders higher production values for the Rougeaus since the involved level of craft in theme production invariably implies WWF investment in representing characters. Heels need to win a lot to raise the dramatic stakes, and The Rougeaus did that night. With the arena cutting to silence, The Rockers remained in the ring agonizing on their loss, a ritual Roland Barthes described as a "gesture of the vanquished wrestler [signifying] to the world a defeat, which far from disguising, he emphasizes and holds like a pause in music." (24) The Rockers would fight on, but no longer with vocals in their theme; babyfaces cannot afford amateur vocals. Although they won the rivalry with The Rougeaus months later, The Rockers began publicly experiencing scripted turmoil, resulting in one, Sean Michaels, attacking the other, Marty

¹⁶ Crowbar2009. "Rockers vs. Rougeau Brothers WWF 89." Online video clip. *Youtube*. 27 December, 2008. Web. June 28, 2013.

Janetty, over potential stardom as a singles competitor. Turning heel, Michaels would enter to his own new theme, *Sexy Boy*, in which the wrestler himself sang about his looks and ability to seduce women. This theme, a slower and more harmonically complex rock track, was unrelated to his previous one with The Rockers. Michaels walked bobbing his head in rhythm, his face upturned to dismiss the audience.

(2) Face to Heel Theme Alteration: Jake ‘the Snake’ Roberts (1991)

Jake ‘The Snake’ Roberts wrestled for years as a babyface, frightening arrogant heels with his pet Boa constrictor, revealing their inner cowardice. Roberts’ workman-like walk was always in step with his theme, beginning with a pulsating synth bass of sixteenth notes at 104 beats per minute [figure 5]. An E minor 7th chord suspends over the bass, dynamically intensifying before the arrival of the drums. The beat enters over chords of D major and B minor 7th before confirming the tonic with E minor 7th. Repeated, ascending A minor and B minor chords lead to a deceptive cadence on C major with added sixth as if to signify Jake’s endless personal struggle for justice. Before returning to repeat the progression starting on D major, a short bass riff occurs, later becoming a major component in Roberts’ next theme.

Turning heel in the fall of 1991, Roberts produced a new snake, a live king cobra, to bite an incapacitated babyface Randy Savage, much to the horror of the audience. Interviewed days later at Survivor Series, Roberts entered to a theme beginning with the ominous, echoing words “trust me...”¹⁷ The previously mentioned synth bass riff appears reshaped, now distorted and reverbed in a slower tempo of 84 beats per minute [figure 6].

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 81.

Accented syncopation from the original theme has disappeared, each note receiving slight staccato attacks. The new bass riff repeats throughout the theme as the original chord progression mostly remains. However, the initial suspended chord from the original has been altered to emphasize the pitch A, giving an impression of d minor. The downbeat of an accented low pitch D opening the original has been replaced by bass drum, and while in strict time, it feels unlevelled due to always arriving on the offbeat. The original harmony remains though much quieter, distorted, and suspended for longer durations. The WWF fan would probably be aware of the changes to the harmonic rhythm but not the extent of the similarity to its original most likely due to smaller voice leading movements and tied notes between shared pitches between chords. The crowd at the Survivor Series booed heavily as Roberts mirrored these alterations, walking unevenly in a slower, slithering pace.

(3) Tatanka vs. Rick ‘The Model’ Martel, WrestleMania VIII (1992)

The success of the Rock n’ Wrestling Connection ensured many babyfaces entering to rock themes despite the cultural background of their characters. At WrestleMania VIII, a young wrestler known as Tatanka, a Lumbee Native American character, competed against fashion conscious heel Rick ‘The Model’ Martel, who previously taunted Tatanka for his lack of class and ignorance of fashion. Before their entrances, several Lumbee men danced in the ring to authentic Lumbee music (consisting of voice and drums) in support of Tatanka. Reinforcing stereotypes as he is interviewed backstage, Martel informs the audience that the match might not take place since

“Tatanka [was] outside *scalping* tickets.”¹⁸ Chris Samuels, who played Tatanka, was a registered member of the Lumbee people from Pembroke, North Carolina. The WWF had long made use of American Indian characters, though they were never actual Native Americans and they did not have entrance themes. Since his debut, the WWF announcers repeatedly mentioned Tatanka, a babyface, as authentically Native American. Promos were filmed showing Tatanka educated by tribal elders on the meaning of his dress, war cry, and face paint, though his appearance, much like the names for his wrestling moves, were based more on a pan-Indian Hollywood representation than traditional Lumbee attire or terminology. Tatanka claimed to embody the spirit of all Native Americans; however, after the Lumbee men completed their dance, Tatanka entered running in tempo to separate music, looking and sounding much different.

Tatanka’s theme begins with his ululating, a practice traditionally performed by women in American Indian cultures but one Chris Samuels routinely performed during his matches. His ululation occurs before he enters the arena, disrupting Roland Barthes’ assertion that the body acts as first moral indicator. More important, the ululation alters how the listeners interpret the music to follow. I played Tatanka’s theme for several friends and colleagues, first without the opening ululation, the second time included. Without the ululation, most heard it as a standard rock riff. When including the ululation, each listener immediately reassessed the instrumentals as containing American Indian stereotypes. Ethnomusicologist David Samuels, in an interview with the author, says that Tatanka’s theme, featuring staccato, accented pentatonic chords and repeated perfect fifth intervals, resembles the musical representation of warring Apache Indians in 1940s and

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 78.

50s Hollywood films (2011) [figure 7].¹⁹ Heel broadcaster Bobby Heenan enforces these stereotypes, asking his partner about greeting Tatanka properly with “Hey-how-are-ya, Hey-how-are-ya,” falling perfect 5ths in his speech to mimic the staccato ending of his ululation.

In Tatanka’s theme, stereotypes run together to hint at the inflections of the blues scale (inclusion of D flat in G minor). For cheering WWF audiences, an awareness of Tatanka’s musical assimilation trumps his repeated narrative as authentic Native American. Dancing sideways in rhythm with his theme, Tatanka high fives fans whom, just moments earlier, showed little appreciation for true Lumbee music.

Spraying his “Arrogance” perfume from an atomizer, Tatanka’s opponent, ‘The Model’ entered wearing short purple tights with a tuxedo top. Opening with dream-like harp glissandos, The Model’s theme leads to poppy jazz with slurred soprano saxophone, electric piano, and drums recalling the sound of Kenny G. With a “Yes, I am a model” button on his top, Martel walks to the ring as if a runway, dismissing fans with his head upturned. During the match, Tatanka uses his ululation attempting to rally the crowd. Tatanka goes on to win the contest, and with his theme playing, again proceeds to high five fans while dancing sideways. Gorilla Monsoon states, “What a future this youngster has, a real Native American!” His theme and appearance are based on stereotypes, but Henry Jenkins III reminds us the WWF will “demean groups even when they are intended to provide positive role models.” (Jenkins 64) Martel soon left the WWF with Tatanka promoted in the storylines, his righteousness deriving from supposed awareness of heritage, yet more importantly his embrace of rock n’ roll. Curiously enough,

¹⁹ Samuels, David. (2011, September 26). Telephone interview.

Tatanka's theme resembles Ted Dibiase's but without the accented syncopation and slight swing [Figure 8]. Tatanka would join Dibiase's 'The Million Dollar Team' when turning heel in 1994.

Rick 'The Model' Martel's theme was recycled years later in 1997 for pornographic film character Val Venis. Keeping the bass and drums instrumentation, the theme takes new meaning through different playing techniques and slight variations in the chord progressions [Figure 9]. Alto saxophone growling and glissandos, matched with more sophisticated improvisation, add to the cliché for pornographic film soundtracks. Emphasizing pitch C on the saxophone in measure five implies chord switches from F# minor to raunchier F# minor 13, while changes from D major to d minor in measure thirteen add for greater harmonic contrast to the established key of e minor.

(4) Foreign Fanatics/World Music Heels

While the earliest wrestling promoters relied on local, regional hostilities to draw heat, or strong crowd reaction, the advent of television in the 1950s led promoters to create heels thought evil to all-American working class people regardless of geography. Nazi characters were the most successful heels following World War II, while Asian wrestlers played Japanese characters, a trend continuing through the 80s and 90s (Beekman 94).

'World music' for heels must sound exotic to WWF fans if the character remains silent, because hints of assimilation undermine the narrative. Bowing to their evil manager, Mr. Fuji, the highflying tag team The Orient Express ran silently to a fast

pentatonic theme played on xylophones in perfect fourths. In contrast, the larger heel Sumo wrestling character Yokozuna walked to a slow pentatonic melody played on a Japanese flute supported with echoing, reverbing stick hits. Yokozuna does not speak English in the storylines, so audiences denote evil intentions from his meditative enjoyment of music composed with no intention of exciting them. A greater allowance for musical hybridity occurs when characters speak English. These themes, even with rock instrumentation, imply foreignness with one offset instrument even when the offset instrument has nothing to do with the evolution of the character. It is enough if it sounds foreign. Iranian character The Iron Sheik, with an oath to humble and break the backs of all Americans, had a sitar theme with electric guitar and drum accompaniment. Toothpick chewing, machismo Cuban character Razor ‘The Bad Guy’ Ramon entered to loud cowbells and older synthesizers, making associations with Al Pacino’s character from the 1983 film *Scarface*.

Political theme music reflects changing climates and foretells future character development. Soviet characters continued as political heels as the USSR fell apart in the late 80s, and no one was more associated with deploring the values of American audiences than the lumbering Nicolai Volkoff and his tag team known as The Bolsheviks. His theme, *All for the Motherland*, opens with two intimidating bars in C minor quickly leading to a mournful trumpet solo, perhaps hinting at inner personal struggles [figure 10]. At WrestleMania VI, the first WrestleMania after the fall of the Soviet Union, The Bolsheviks were filmed warming up their voices in bathrooms before their match. Entering the ring, they began their ritual of singing the *Soviet National Anthem*. The

crowd cheered as their opponents, The Hart Foundation, attacked them mid-verse. “You know those two Bolsheviks don’t like to be messed with when it comes to their singing,” stated broadcaster Jesse Ventura.²⁰ After quickly losing the contest, The Bolsheviks no longer featured in WWF storylines. Volkoff, revealing heartbreak over the Soviet’s destruction of his beloved homeland, was revealed as a patriotic Lithuanian-American babyface by changing his theme to Sousa’s *The Stars and Stripes Forever*.

The idea of recording ‘world music’ formed an implicit component in the storyline of heel Kamala, supposed ‘Ugandan Cannibal’ and reported former bodyguard of Idi-Amin. Like a carnival man introducing a member of a sideshow, the character Dr. Harvey Whippleman beckoned “The Lord of the Jungle,” and a bare-chested, spear carrying, wood-masked wrestler entered behind his “handler” cloaked in a dated insect repelling safari suit.²¹ The arena’s loudspeakers blared unison singing of a pentatonic melody with foot stomps and ululations [figure 11]. The singing is from Vangelis’ *O Papathanassiou, Earth Part 2* (1973).²² However, its recording does not include any stomps or ululations, meaning WWF composers specifically layered them for Kamala’s theme. The steady stomps quickly fall out of sync with the freer tempo singing on Vangelis’ recording. The singing itself does not necessarily evoke any particular culture, but the additions recall musical stereotypes depicting ‘savages’ in Hollywood films from the 50s and earlier, perhaps most evident in Disney’s *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (1953). Furthermore, Kamala’s theme intends to resemble authentic, vintage field recordings with inclusion of highly audible record-popping effects and distortions.

²⁰ *WWF WrestleMania VI*. Coliseum Home Video, 1990. Videocassette.

²¹ *WWF Survivor Series 1992*. Coliseum Home Video, 1992. Videocassette.

²² Vangelis. “O Papathanassiou.” *Earth*. Vertigo, 1973. LP.

After losing a *coffin match*, Kamala violently ended his association with Whippleman and his former handler. Seeking guidance, he was embraced by the African American manager Reverend Slick, who made it his mission to ‘civilize’ the Ugandan through a series of televised trips to movie theaters and bowling alleys. Once transitioned, Kamala’s theme was updated in later appearances to feature professionally recorded digital mbiras and drums.

(5) High Brow Heels and Classical Music

Most themes featuring classical music are associated with narcissistic or wealthy personalities, playing on the perception of highbrow culture’s unkindly attitude towards the seemingly humble, working class world of wrestling. The venue matters: the use of classical themes in WWF arenas implies not only disdain for the crowd but also implies a rejection of rock music and popular culture, no matter how some orchestral music attaches to heroic associations in cinema and concert halls. Like music in ‘real sports,’ entrance themes intend to excite arena crowds, so they boo the foreign classical themes and cheer the domestic rock themes. Additionally, the absence of a steady drumbeat or pulse in any genre implies a heel. Only in a rare instance were competing wrestlers each assigned classical themes, and this was after one of the participants, Randy Savage, played a heel for years under the same music.

The first recorded use of classical music in wrestling occurred in the 1950s with ‘Gorgeous’ George Wagner and Elgar’s *Pomp and Circumstance (#1 in D Major)*. Like Rick ‘The Model’ Martel, George sprayed perfume from an atomizer and stuck his nose

to the crowd as a butler cleaned his feet. As sixty percent of wrestling audiences at the time were women, Wagner, with long bleached blonde hair held together by a bobby pin, simultaneously drew praise from sexually repressed women and scorn from homophobic men (Beekman 83). By the 1980s, ‘Macho Man’ Randy Savage continued the Elgar tradition, while heel Ric Flair entered to Richard Strauss. Harley Race and King Haku entered to Mussorgsky’s ‘The Great Gate of Kiev’ from *Pictures at an Exhibition* despite its key of E Flat having a separate classical tradition of symbolizing heroism.

Original classical-like instrumental themes composed in the early 90s mockingly exaggerated the gestures of the genre. The character Mr. Perfect had a pentatonic theme so grand that every note was supported with timpani hits [figure 12]. The theme for bodybuilding wrestler Lex Luger, first known as ‘The Narcissist,’ took inspiration from the slow section in Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue*. Switching to a patriotic babyface, his updated, unrelated rock theme included lyrics on the personal qualities it took to be a hero.

Hunter Hearst Helmsley, a wealthy blueblood character from Greenwich, CT, entered to a gentle, mock-baroque piece complete with synth flute, harpsichord, and strings [figure 13]. Deriving its harmony from a descending G major scale, it vaguely recalls Bach’s *Goldberg Variations*. The repeated rhythmic and melodic gestures combine with exaggerated harpsichord trills to hint at parody, while the uncharacteristically loud pizzicato strings are intended to humorously blur the perception of the piece as authentically Baroque. When his initial WWF push was not particularly successful, Helmsley became HHH and entered to the lively ‘Ode to Joy’ from

Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.

(6) The Darkside vs. The Royals, Survivor Series (1995)

Wrestlers with individual themes musically need to have their musical tags unified for the sake of moral homogeneity in special tag team matches. Held every November since 1987, the annual Survivor Series features two battling teams of four wrestlers each, babyfaces versus heels, grouped through interlinking storylines. The captains of each team enter separately to highlight the main rivalry. The 1995 event pitted babyfaces The Darkside vs. heels The Royals. Three of the Royals, Hunter Hearst Helmsley, Jerry 'The King' Lawler, and Isaac 'The Royal Dentist' Yankem, were each assigned classical themes as individual wrestlers, but this night were grouped under Lawler's *Great Gate of Kiev*, which was previously used in the 1980s by Harley Race and King Haku. The Royals' five hundred pound captain, Mabel, appeared months earlier in the tag team Men On A Mission, proclaiming themselves "a positive influence to inner-city youths struggling to decipher right from wrong."²³ Break dancing to upbeat hip-hop à la decade earlier Run-DMC, they soon became fan favorites, even appearing in WWF music videos:

"M to the A to the B - E - L
He gets ready at the sound of the bell"²⁴

Citing underappreciate fans, Mabel turned heel as a singles competitor.

Embracing the high crimes of the streets, he entered to slower, wordless hip-hop beats

²³ Shields, Brian and Kevin Sullivan. *WWE Encyclopedia*. London: Dorling Kindersley, 2008.

²⁴ MRMONDAYNIGHT2006V1. "WWF-Men On a Mission Promo." Online video clip. *Youtube*. 22 March, 2010. Web. July 6, 2013.

layered over police and ambulance sirens, recalling NWA's *Gangsta Gangsta*. "He's not dancing tonight," one surprised broadcaster observed at the time. "He's all business."²⁵ Winning the 1995 King of the Ring tournament to proclaim himself King Mabel, he entered while carried on a throne. Aligning with fellow royal combatants, his theme was revised to include an inserted brass prelude in C before the sirens and beats.

As I have demonstrated, entrance themes are used to represent a wrestler's culture or character type, sometimes both, and in Survivor Series matches in the 1990s, babyfaces are united through positive cultural representation instead of character. The Darkside included Savio Vega, a Puerto Rican; Fatu, a Samoan; and Henry Godwinn, an Arkansan hillbilly character.²⁶ Unifying under Vega's salsa theme, their collective implicitly signifies inclusive dancing culture rather than the cultural mindset of an individual wrestler.

For team captain The Undertaker, ritual eventually trumped morality. With enhanced theatrical entrances gaining popularity, The Undertaker's included pyrotechnics, smoke, and cutting arena lights. Contrary to the use of classical music to underline highbrow, about which I have written above, his theme on church bells and organ featured a variation in e minor on Chopin's funeral march [figure 14]. Switching to babyface, The Undertaker was perhaps the first wrestler keeping an initial heel theme despite its dark moral implications, and also the first embraced by fans for reasons other than his subscribed moral code. Winning against The Royals, The Undertaker continued a

²⁵ *WWF King of the Ring 1995*. Coliseum Home Video, 1995. Videocassette.

²⁶ Despite growing up in Puerto Rico, the man who portrayed Savio Vega previously wrestled as the heel Kwang. A masked man hailing from 'The Orient', Kwang's theme featured a slow pentatonic theme performed on Koto, flute, and gongs. Fatu had spent his career in 'savage'-portraying tag teams, The Samoan Swat Team and The Headshrinkers, but recently switched to babyface by demonstrating his ability to speak English.

long babyface career as the Chopin portion of his theme morphed beyond recognition, the organ slowly replaced by rock electric guitar, full choir, and heavy rock drums, only church bells remaining from the initial theme.

(7) Into The Attitude Era: ‘Stone Cold’ Steve Austin and The Nation of Domination (1996-1997)

By the mid 90s, The WWF was in a TV ratings war with its rival, Ted Turner-backed World Championship Wrestling (WCW), each week attempting to outdo the other in spectacle. Facing this competition, Vince McMahon gave a “New Directions” speech to his writing staff stating WWF storylines would no longer feature good/evil, black/white morality plays (Beekman 134). Instead, they borrowed heavily from Philadelphia-based promotion Extreme Championship Wrestling (ECW), unleashing more violent and adult-oriented content. Introducing the ‘Titantron’, a giant video monitor projecting images associated with wrestlers making their entrances, meant less emphasis on themes to signify morality. Filming a segment for Monday Night Raw, McMahon announced the new era:

It has been said that anything can happen here in the World Wrestling Federation, but now, more than ever, truer words have never been spoken. This is a conscious effort on our part to ‘open the creative envelope’, so to speak, in order to entertain you in a more contemporary manner.... We borrow from such program niches like soap-operas, like "The Days of Our Lives", or, music videos such as those on MTV, Daytime talk-shows like "Jerry Springer" ... We, in the WWF, think that you, the audience, are quite frankly tired of having your intelligence insulted. We also think that you're tired of the same old simplistic theory of good guys versus bad guys. Surely the era of the superhero urging you to ‘say your prayers and take your vitamins’ is definitely passé.²⁷

²⁷ RawIsAttitude. “Vince McMahon Introduces the Attitude Era.” Online video clip. Youtube. 5 July, 2010. Web. August 22, 2013.

Introducing shades of grey to characters, the ‘badass’ replaced the traditional babyface, with no one better suited for this role than Steve Austin. Austin began his career in WCW as ‘Stunning Steve’, a narcissist with bleached blonde hair and regal, orchestral music. Shaved bald with a goatee upon WWF arrival in 1996, his ‘Ringmaster’ and ‘Stone Cold’ heel characters showed utter contempt for the audience and ruthlessness against competitors, walking bullish to sounds of breaking glass before slow rising string glissando, bass, and drum hits leading to an e minor theme [figure 15].

Austin was matched against Jake Roberts at the 1996 event, King of the Ring. Roberts portrayed a weathered, born-again Evangelical babyface, keeping his nostalgic synth theme from the late 80s and early 90s, previously seen in [figure 5]. Quickly defeating Roberts, Austin took the microphone:

The first thing I want to be done is to get that piece of crap out of my ring! Don’t just get him out of the ring, get him out of the WWF...You sit there and you thump your bible and you say your prayers, and it didn’t get you anywhere. Talking about John 3:16. Austin 3:16 says, ‘I’ve just whipped your ass!’²⁸

With a sizable portion of the audience cheering, Austin soon became the most unconventional babyface superstar in WWF history. Emerging with louder breaking glass sounds and repeating heavy metal guitar riffs, his updated theme [Figure 16] derived from the initial melody and from the German augmented 6th chords in his previous theme [Figure 15]. Walking more quickly, he bobbed his head in rhythm, cursing to himself and extending his middle fingers to cheering audiences.

Meanwhile, The Nation of Domination, a four-man group patterned after The Nation of Islam and Black Panther Party, also made transitions into this era. Adopting the

²⁸ *WWF King of the Ring 1996*. Coliseum Home Video, 1996. Videocassette.

fist in the air ‘Nation Salute,’ their initial storylines in 1996 included feuding with various racial factions, dismissing one another for ‘not being black enough’, and public condemning certain members of secretly wishing to be white. Their theme opened with group chanting of “We are The Nation of Domination!” followed with slow, powerful drums and bass, and reiterations of “Nation” or “Domination” every four bars, each syllable receiving accents, staccato attacks [Figure 17]. Months later, their theme was altered to include amateur rapping from each Nation member detailing how they beat people down and force them “on [their] knees [to] start praying.” Later omissions of the rap kept only the original instrumentals and chants remaining. By 1997, the group shifted weekly from seemingly serious portrayals to comedic parody, making the omission of parody rapping on future themes blur their characters as heels or comic babyfaces. Moving to full parody, each member gained in popularity as they transformed into new characters claimed as their true selves. One member, aforementioned Kama Mustafa, formerly Papa Shango, became a pimp known as The Godfather, escorted to the ring by scantily clad women known as the ‘Hoe Train.’ Given a new, up-tempo theme based on 70s funk, he overlay the catchphrases “let’s get on the hoe train” and “pimps up, hoes down,” dancing on his toes while carrying a cane. The same generation of kids who booed Papa Shango when he attacked righteous Hulk Hogan at WrestleMania VIII, now teenagers, loved him.

Postlude

During the 'Attitude Era' (1997-2002), theme music diversity decreased due to the de-emphasis of good vs. evil storylines and a greater desire for creating commercial product. The WWF began releasing musical albums more frequently in the late 1990s, with one, *WWF: The Music Vol. 3*, selling over a million copies and reaching #4 on the Billboard chart.²⁹ Three albums were released in 2001 alone. Contracting more bands and artists, and with seemingly every theme bound for commercial release, heavy metal and hip-hop became the exclusive WWF musical genres. By 2013, every major wrestling pay-per-view event had its own digital release featuring music heard during the broadcast.³⁰

Due to issues with copyright and royalties, the WWF replaced many of the 80s and early 90s themes when older wrestling events were rereleased on DVD and Blu-ray. Websites like Youtube have recently revived interest in earlier entrance music, particularly from users posting converted VHS recordings containing the unedited original material. Some fans have even created online shows featuring nostalgic round table debates on the effectiveness of specific themes. Watching these shows and reading online discussions, I gather that many fans have reservations about current themes, unsure whether they function to sell a character or itself. While marketing rock and hip-hop albums has been lucrative for the WWF, blurring the musical distinction between good vs. evil potentially has its cost. It is unclear whether the commercial success of less musically diverse themes outweighs dulling the dramatic aspect of the matches that

²⁹ Basham, David. "Got Charts? Wrestling with WWF LPs." *MTV.com*. 5 April, 2002. Web. September 2, 2013.

³⁰ WrestleMania XXIX, SummerSlam 2013

themes were initially designed to enhance. Jenkins III, in his comments later on the ‘Attitude Era’, echoed these concerns: “Maybe we are nostalgic for the moral clarity of traditional melodrama because at least then we’d know what ground to defend and whom to fight.”³¹ It’s not enough to simply recognize any given theme with a particular wrestler. Fans of wrestling have always been captivated by the drama of its boundaries, boundaries enhanced and intensified by musical practice. Whether the new musical practices will engender similar loyalty remains to be seen.

³¹ Jenkins III, Henry. “Afterword, Part 1: Wrestling with Theory, Grappling with Politics.” *Steel Chair to the Head*. Ed. Nicholas Sammond. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.

Musical Figures

♩ = 108

Seductive Sprechstimme

Val Venis

Growled

Alto Sax

Hel-lo — La - dies —

(Pyrotechnics)

Percussion

Figure 1: Val Venis Theme (Intro)

♩ = 84

(Drums)

(Pyrotechnics)

If ya smell!... ..what The Rock!... ..is cookin'!

Figure 2: The Rock's Theme (Revised Intro)

$\text{♩} = 80$

Vocals

Vox.

From

5

Mon-tre-al to Mem-phis Par-le vous Fran-cais? Tell all the girls! The Rou-geaus' on their way!

Figure 3: Fabulous Rougeaus' Theme (All-American Boys)

$\text{♩} = 88$

Electric Guitar

E.Gtr.

Figure 4: Rockers' Theme



Figure 5: Jake 'The Snake's First Theme Condensed (babyface)



Figure 6: Jake The Snake's 2nd Theme (heel)



Figure 7: Tatanka's Theme

Figure 8 compares the "Ted Dibiase Theme" with "Tatanka's Theme". The score is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 92 BPM. It features three staves: "Dibiase Vocals" in treble clef, "Dibiase Elec. Guitar" in bass clef, and "Tatanka Theme" in bass clef. The vocal line includes the lyrics "Mo - ney Mo - ney Mo - ney Mo - ney Mo - ney". The guitar and theme staves provide accompaniment with chords and notes, some marked with accents.

Figure 8: Ted Dibiase Theme compared with Tatanka's

$\text{♩} = 108$

Em7 F#m

'Martel'
Alto Sax

Em7 f#m13

Val Venus
Alto Sax

Bass Guitar

6 G A

Martel

6 G A

Val

6

Bass

12 D G

Martel

12 Dm G

Val

12

Bass

Figure 9: Rick Martel and Val Venus Themes with Different Saxophone Parts

Figure 9: Continued

This musical score segment features three staves: Martel (top), Val (middle), and Bass (bottom). The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The Martel staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature change to one sharp. The Val staff also begins with a treble clef and a key signature change to one sharp. The Bass staff begins with a bass clef and a key signature change to one sharp. The Martel staff has a measure rest marked '17' and then plays a melody. The Val staff has a measure rest marked '17' and then plays a melody. The Bass staff has a measure rest marked '17' and then plays a melody. Chords A, Am, F, and G are indicated above the staves. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' and a slur in the Val staff.

Figure 9: Continued

Figure 10: Nicolai Volkoff Theme- "All for the Motherland"

This musical score segment features two staves: Trumpet in C (top) and Piano (bottom). The key signature has two flats (Bb, Eb) and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 48. The Trumpet in C staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature change to two flats. The Piano staff begins with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a key signature change to two flats. The Trumpet in C staff has a measure rest marked '17' and then plays a melody. The Piano staff has a measure rest marked '17' and then plays a melody. Dynamics *f* (forte) and *p* (piano) are indicated. The Piano staff has a triplet of eighth notes marked with a '3' and a slur.

Figure 10: Nicolai Volkoff Theme- "All for the Motherland"

♩ = 132

Ululation (added)

Group Vocals 1

Group Vocals 2

Added

Footstomps (added)

Huh! Huh! Huh! Huh! Huh! Huh!

Percussion

Vox. 1

5

Ululation continued

Original Vangelis Recording

Ah

Vox. 2

Perc.

5

9

Vox. 1

Ah

Vox. 2

Perc.

9

Figure 11: Kamala Theme (Vangelis with added vocals and stomps)

♩ = 100

Figure 12: Mr. Perfect Theme



Figure 13: Hunter Hearst Helmsley Theme (Intro)



Figure 14: The Undertaker Theme (Heel and Babyface)

♩ = 56

Germ. +6

Figure 15: 'Stone Cold' Steve Austin First Theme (Heel)

♩ = 88

Distorted Elec. Guitar

Figure 16: 'Stone Cold' Steve Austin Second Theme (babyface)

♩ = 80

Vocals

We are the Na - tion! of Do-mi-Na - tion! Na-tion! Na-tion!

Figure 17: Nation of Domination (Intro)

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Biography

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